

MEDICAL AND SANITARY NOTES.

TO AVERT OPTHALMIA.—A writer in "Nature" states that three cases have come under his personal observation in which brown-skinned natives in very different parts of the world blacken their faces to protect them from intense light and heat. The example he gives are those of the inhabitants of Morocco, as well as of others along the north of Africa, who blacken themselves over the eyes for the purpose of averting ophthalmia from the glare of hot sand. The natives of Fiji pursue the same method, as do also the natives of the Sunda Islands; and it is only reasonable to suppose that a practice of such wide diffusion and such striking similarity is found really natural, that is, protective, in the places and under the circumstances contemplated.

NEW ARTICLE IN PHARMACY.—M. Yvon, a pharmaceutical chemist, Paris, proposes a new form of mercury ointment, of which soap is the basis, as a substitute for the old mercurial ointment. The formula is one thousand grains of soft soap, black or white, as neutral as possible, and one thousand grains of mercury, prepared as with sausages. During the preparation, the soap, being in contact in all its parts, loses the excess of its caustic alkalinity. The extraction of the mercury is effected as completely as with sausages, and much more rapidly. This ointment presents the precious property of not softening under the action of heat, and undergoes no alteration of its freshness with the elapse of time.

IMPORTANCE OF THE WILLOW IN MEDICINE.—An interesting fact is that the power of extensive growth of the willow found to be so material in its influence, but that from a certain species of this same beautiful tree, or its bark, is derived the compound; this new bark, an anti-epileptic preparation called salicin; it is of a pure, bitter taste, highly fibrous in texture, and is most used in various solutions, also in surgical operations, and is the most effectual preventive of pectorification in the system yet known. For these purposes the willow is now being extensively and systematically cultivated. At the end of two years the switches are four to seven feet long, and are cut and gathered into bunches like sheaves of wheat; in the stripping the bark are steeped in water and the bark at the larger end is loosened for a couple of weeks. The bark is then dried, and the switches placed in the mechanical cutter and with a pair of pliers are pulled through with a sudden jerk, being then wiped off with a wooden cloth, bound, and laid away to dry. All the leaves and bark are dried and laid, the average yield being a ton to the acre, the willows commanding, when dry, two hundred dollars per ton.

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